

## Connecticut Post: House sends \$290b farm bill to Senate

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The Senate is expected to approve the bill today sending it to President Bush who has openly declared that it will be vetoed. The veto may not stand given the huge support the legislation enjoys, passing the House by a veto-proof margin of 318-106.

Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-3, praised the farm legislation for providing additional help to families struggling with higher food bills. It boosts food stamp funding by nearly \$10.4 billion over five years. "Each day 12.6 million children and 22.8 million adults experience hunger at some point during the day - including nearly 31 percent of the population in rural areas who rely on food stamps," DeLauro said. "Notably, the farm bill focuses on nutrition. Often, when hard times hit, it is not the rent or heating bill where families cut back, but on purchasing food."

From 2000 to 2007 the number of Connecticut residents receiving food stamps has increased 29 percent from an average 165,059 per month to 212,562 per month. On average, a food stamp recipient receives about \$1.10 per meal in benefits.

The bill also ratchets up funding for food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens from \$140 million to \$240 million a year, she said. Rep. Christopher Shays, R-4, was the only Connecticut lawmaker to oppose the bill, voting against what he said was wasteful government farm subsidies.

The bill would increase spending by 44 percent annually over the existing law that was adopted in 2002. It would also add billions in future costs through increased target prices and loan rates and continue to subsidize farmers making up to \$2.5 million, Shays said. The five-year bill includes about \$40 billion for farm subsidies and

\$30 billion that would go to farmers who do leave their land fallow and for conservation purposes.

Rep. Chris Murphy, D-5, said the bill reauthorized an important tax incentive that had expired at the end of 2007 that encourages landowners to place conservation easements on their property to permanently protect the land from development.

"This tax incentive provides an enticement for responsible landowners that want to protect their properties, but can't afford the financial sacrifice such donations often entail. In northwest Connecticut, re-establishing this tax break is critically important to protecting our natural heritage and cherished regional character," Murphy said. In the two years before the tax incentive expired, dozens of community land trusts in Connecticut saw dramatic increases in easement donations, he said. Nationally, more than 2 million acres was voluntarily preserved just in 2007.

Rep. John Larson, D-1, said the legislation also includes more consumer protections against rising oil prices by giving the Commodity Futures Trading Commission more authority to oversee oil futures trades and increasing penalties for market manipulation. "This legislation makes great progress in the march to put American consumers first. It sends a signal to speculators that their days manipulating the market and driving up the price of oil are numbered," Larson said.

Ahead of the House vote, Bush made his objections clear, noting that married farmers who make up to \$1.5 million still could collect subsidies under the new farm bill. "I believe doing so at a time of record farm income is irresponsible and jeopardizes America's support for necessary farm programs," Bush said.

The bill also would:

- Increase subsidies for certain crops, including fruits and vegetables excluded from previous farm bills.
- Extend dairy programs.
- Increase loan rates for sugar producers.
- Urge the government to buy surplus sugar and sell it to ethanol producers for use in a mixture with corn.
- Cut a per-gallon ethanol tax credit for refiners from 51 cents to 45 cents. The credit supports the blending of fuel with the corn-based additive. More money would go to cellulosic ethanol, made from plant matter.
- Require that meats and other fresh foods carry labels with their country of origin.

- Stop allowing farmers to collect subsidies for multiple farm businesses.
- Reopen a major discrimination case against the Agriculture Department. Thousands of black farmers who missed a deadline would get a chance to file claims alleging they were denied loans or other subsidies.
- Pay farmers for weather-related farm losses from a new \$3.8 billion disaster relief fund.

The Associated Press contributed to this report. Congressional negotiators tried for weeks to come closer to the White House on the amount of money paid to wealthy farmers - one of the chief sticking points with the administration.

The legislation would make small cuts to direct payments, which are distributed to some farmers no matter how much they grow. The farm bill also would eliminate some federal payments to individuals with more than \$750,000 in annual farm income - or married farmers who make more than \$1.5 million.

Individuals who make more than \$500,000 or couples who make more than \$1 million jointly in nonfarm income also would not be eligible for subsidies.

Under current law, there is no income limit for farmers, and married couples who make less than one-fourth of their income from farming will not receive subsidies if their joint income exceeds \$5 million. The administration originally proposed a cap for those who make more than \$200,000 in annual gross income, but later indicated it could accept a limit of \$500,000. Previously, negotiators were considering a \$950,000 income cap on farm income.